

# Project Proposal

**Proposal Title:** Ibapah Sagebrush Improvement - Year 3

**Proposal Number:** 1377

**DWR Region:** Central Region

**Lead Agency:** BLM

**County:** Tooele

**Project Manager:** Brook Chadwick

**PM Phone:** 8014915653

**Regional Priority:** Within Focus Area

**Project Type:** Terrestrial Habitat

**Proposed Start Date:** 7/1/2009

**Project Location:** 6 miles southeast of Ibapah on the western side of the Deep Creek Mountains

**Project Description:** Bullhog 1,400 acres of pinyon and juniper trees that have encroached on sagebrush habitat

**Description of Problem/Need:** Juniper expansion on the western slopes of the Deep Creek Mountains has degraded sagebrush habitat and greatly increased the risk of severe wildfire. Reducing juniper on the landscape will enhance wildlife habitat, improve fire regime condition class, and reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels. This phase is part of Ibapah and Deep Creek Fuels projects where sagebrush is currently being treated to decrease fuel loading and enhance wildlife habitat. This is the second phase of mastication but the seventh actual treatment within the larger area.

: Healthy sagebrush ecosystems should consist of a diverse array of plants and support a wide variety of wildlife species. However, sagebrush habitat on the western side of the Deep Creek Mountains is seriously degraded due to juniper encroachment. Where junipers dominate they outcompete understory species for light, moisture, and nutrients eventually resulting in nearly complete removal of the understory. Without understory vegetation the native seed bank is depleted and the site becomes susceptible to soil erosion and invasion by cheatgrass. Excessive fuel buildup can eventually lead to catastrophic wildfire which may threaten property and further degrade the ecosystem by promoting the growth and expansion of cheatgrass. Once established, cheatgrass becomes a major obstacle preventing the recolonization and growth of native perennial vegetation. In order to curb this process of degradation it is essential that action be taken. Degraded sagebrush habitat can be improved by removing junipers and if necessary reseeding with perennial species. This proactive approach reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire and possible cheatgrass encroachment by decreasing fuel loads and replenishing the seedbank with desirable species. The Salt Lake Field Office of the BLM will treat the encroaching juniper to decrease the risk of high severity wildfire, restore ecosystem function, and improve wildlife habitat.

**Objectives:** 1. ☐ Improve Fire Regime Condition Class, decrease fuel loading and reduce the risk of catastrophic crown fire by removing at least 90% of existing junipers.

2. ☐ Improve wildlife habitat and increase vegetation diversity by seeding the site with perennials prior to mastication.

**Relevance to Strategic Plans:** The project area occurs within the sagebrush steppe type which is one of the key habitats identified in the WAP. This area supports mule deer (Tier III) and Greater sage grouse (Tier II). Numerous other species of concern (Tier III) also inhabit the area including neotropical birds and raptors.

The proposed treatments lie within Central Region UPCD focus areas.

The proposed treatments will help address strategies outlined in the WDARM sage grouse conservation plan; By 2010, reduce pinyon/juniper stands from sage-grouse use areas. Reduce the threat of conversion of sagebrush stands to invasive/noxious weed communities. Work with public and private partners to implement livestock management plans that address seasonal needs of sagegrouse and livestock operations. By 2016, increase brood-rearing habitat quality in the Resource Area.

The proposed projects will address some of the habitat management strategies outlined in the deer management plan for herd unit 19 (Vernon) including: continue to restore and improve sagebrush steppe habitats critical to deer according to DWR's Habitat Initiative; cooperate with federal land management agencies and private landowners in carrying out habitat improvements such as reseeds, controlled burns, water developments etc. on public and private lands; and maintain and/or enhance forage production through direct range improvements throughout the unit to achieve population management objectives.

The proposed projects will address the following goals and objectives of the Division of Wildlife Resources most recent strategic management plan:

Resource Goal: expand wildlife populations and conserve sensitive species by protecting and improving wildlife habitat.

Objective 1: protect existing wildlife habitat and improve 500,000 acres of critical habitats and watersheds throughout the state by 2010.

Objective 3: conserve sensitive species to prevent them from becoming listed as threatened or endangered.

Constituency Goal: Achieve broad-based support for Division programs and budgets by demonstrating the value of wildlife to all citizens of Utah.

Objective 2: improve communication with wildlife organizations, public officials, private landowners, and government agencies to obtain support for Division programs.

Projects of this nature are identified in the BLM's Dee[ Creek Habitat Management Plan (1981) and Pony Express Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1990) Decision One page 56, as amended by the SLFO Fire Management Plan (FMP) (1998) Alternative 2-Proposed Action/Integrated Fire/Resource Management Plan page seven in order to improve the condition of the rangeland. The objectives in the Deep Creek Fire Management Unit are to utilize fuels treatments to reduce fire severity and occurrence and reduce

# Project Proposal

hazardous fuel accumulation in areas that will reduce the threat of large uncontrolled wildland fires, create mosaics to increase edge effect, and improve wildlife and plant diversity (BLM-Salt Lake Field Office, Fire Management Plan, September 2004). The Deep Creek Valley Fuels Management (UT-020-2003-021), and Government Creek Fuels Treatment (UT-020-2003-0026) NEPA specify the need and authorization for mechanical treatments in this area.

**Potential Risks:** Increase in cheatgrass. Failure of seeded species to establish. Drought.

**Proposed Methods:** 1. ☐ Use rubber-tired or tracked bullhogs to masticate about 1,400 acres of juniper. The treatment will remove at least 90% of existing trees. Residual trees are to be of varying size and age classes and left in small clumps to act as untreated islands. The edges of the treatment unit will be designed in a mosaic fashion to blend into the natural landscape and to increase edge effect. All brush species will be avoided when possible;  
2. ☐ Aerially apply seed on 1,400 acres prior to mastication.

**Shapefile Name:** 1377\_Ibapah\_Yr3\_bullhog\_Ph2\_2009

**Seed Source:** GBRC

**UPCD Reg Team Coord Date:** 11/6/2008

**Proposed  
NEPA Action:**

**Proposed  
Arch Action:**

☒ **Vegetation Monitoring** ☐ **Wildlife Monitoring**

**Monitoring Information:** The BLM will conduct at least two 1/10 acre stand data monitoring sites which include photo points within the treatment boundary. These plots will be read prior to treatment and soon after treatment. The data collected include juniper canopy cover, density, basal diameter, and height. For long term monitoring we request that the UDWR establish a range trend study plot in the area.

**Grazing Management:** The treatments will occur within the Ibapah Allotment which is a pasture system. Juniper encroachment is listed as a threat to native and seeded areas on the allotment. The mastication treatment would improve the demand for forage among livestock and wildlife and would move the area towards the attainment of rangeland health standards (43 CFR 4100-0-2). The treatment will reduce competition with the

## SPECIES BENEFITING

Greater Sage-grouse	Mule Deer	Elk	Neotropical Birds
Ferruginous Hawk			

## LAND OWNERSHIP

Owner	Acres
BLM	1400
<b>Total</b>	<b>1400</b>

## PROPOSED FUNDING

Source	Amount Requested	Date Approved	Amount Approved
BLM WUI	\$218,636.00		\$0.00
BLM ARRA	\$120,000.00	3/12/2009	\$120,000.00
Unfunded Balance	\$92,800.00		\$0.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$431,436.00</b>		<b>\$120,000.00</b>

## PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Description	DWR Account	Partner Contrib.
Personal Services	Project layout and admin. Seasonal 21 days	\$0.00	\$2,700.00

Monday, March 16, 2009 10:26:08 AM

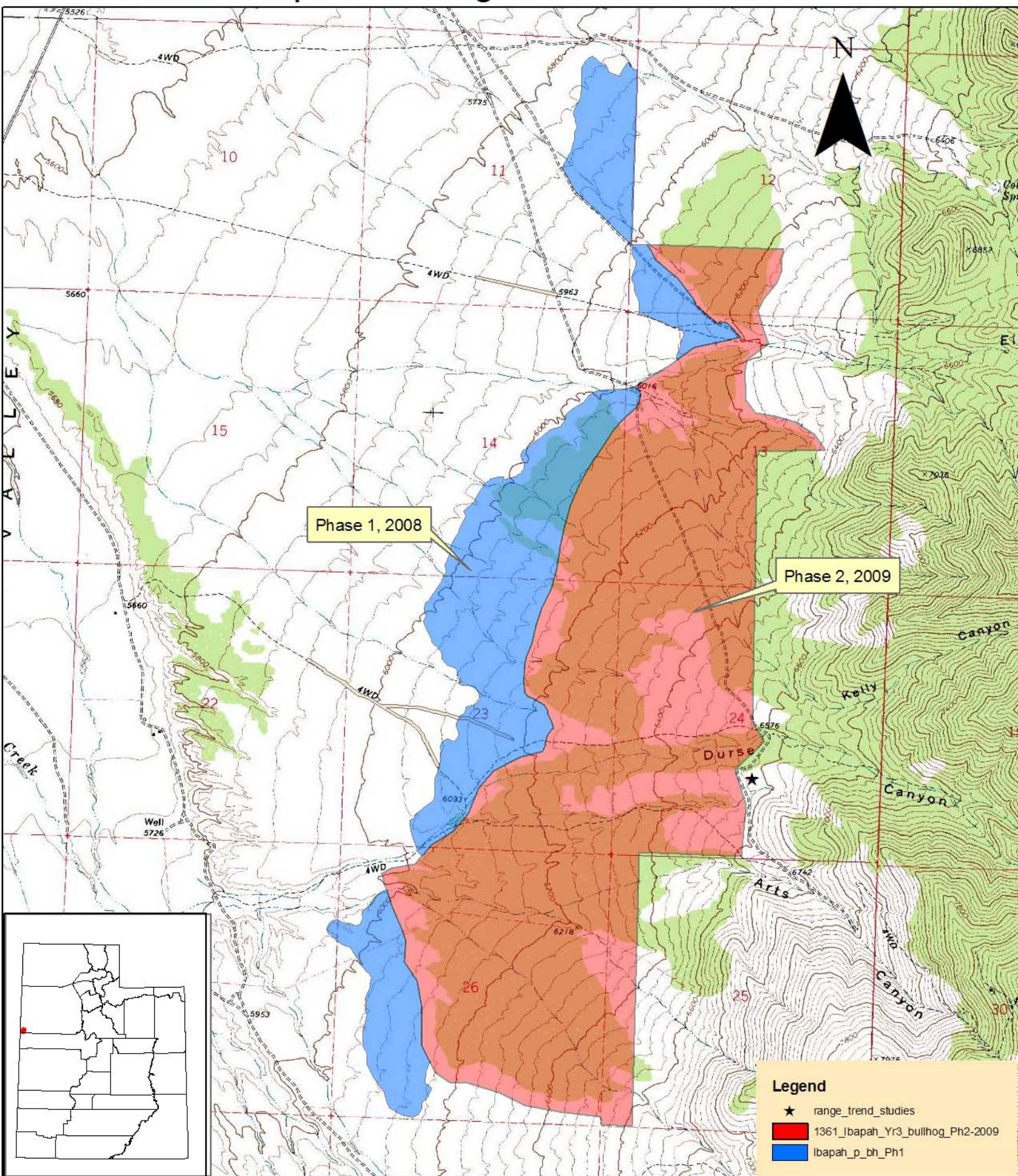
# Project Proposal

Equipment Rental	BLM truck for seasonal	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Materials and Supplies	food and lodging for seasonal	\$0.00	\$950.00
Contractual Services	Cultural clearance for 1,400 acres @ \$12.70/acre	\$0.00	\$17,786.00
Contractual Services	60% of bullhog contract, 840 acres at \$230/acre	\$0.00	\$193,200.00
Contractual Services	40% of bullhog contract, 560 acres @ \$230/acre	\$128,800.00	\$0.00
Seed (GBRC)	Seed for 1,400 acres @ \$60/acre	\$84,000.00	\$0.00
Totals		<b>\$212,800.00</b>	<b>\$218,636.00</b>

## Project Map:



# Ibapah Bullhog Phase 1 and 2



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